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NOTES AND QUERIES

THE ORIGIN OF TOTEMISM. — In his new book, "Totemism and Exogamy," Mr. J. G. Frazer describes what he calls, "the American theory of totemism;" i. e., the theory that the institution of totemism grew out of the personal guardian spirits of individuals (volume iv, page 48), and he cites me as one of the defenders of this theory. Mr. J. Jacobs, in a review of this book in the "New York Times" of October 15, accepts his statement, and seems to consider me as the originator of this theory. It is true that I first expressed this opinion as a result of my study of the Indians of the North Pacific coast.¹

Later on, Mr. Hill-Tout² confirmed my conclusions, and generalized the results obtained by me and by him in the form of a general theory of totemism. In 1897 Miss Alice C. Fletcher³ developed a similar theory, based on her observations of some of the Siouan tribes.

In writing on this subject, and in a number of general discussions of anthropological problems,⁴ I have carefully refrained from interpreting the observations made on the North Pacific coast as a general theory solving the whole problem of totemism. In fact, such would be opposed to the methodological views which I hold. I have emphasized, whenever opportunity has offered, the necessity of studying the development of each ethnological question upon an historical basis, so far as this is possible, in order to gather material by means of which we can ascertain whether the course of development among various peoples has followed the same line, either approximately or in detail. It has always seemed to me that customs which to the observer may seem very much alike, may develop from entirely different sources; in other words, that in the course of the history of culture we have to reckon not simply with a parallel development, which starts from similar psychological conditions, and follows the same course, but rather with divergent developments, in which from the same sources distinct types may evolve, as well as with convergent developments, in which very similar phenomena may develop, starting from entirely distinct sources. For this reason I have never held the opinion that any single formula can be found by which it would be possible to explain the phenomena of all that we are accustomed to call totemism, because I do not believe for a moment that all the phenomena of totemism have had the same or even a similar origin.

¹ *Bastian-Festschrift*, Berlin, 1896, p. 439. Report on the North-Western Tribes of Canada, British Association for the Advancement of Science, 1898, Reprint p. 48; see also Report on the North-Western Tribes of Canada, 1889, Reprint pp. 24 *et seq.*; "The Social Organization and the Secret Societies of the Kwakiutl Indians," Report U. S. National Museum for 1895, Washington, 1897, p. 336.

² *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, 1901-02, vol. vii, sec. II, pp. 6 *et seq.*

³ *The Import of the Totem*, a Study from the Omaha Tribe, Salem, Mass., 1897.

⁴ "Some Traits of Primitive Culture," *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, vol. xvii, 1904, p. 251; *Psychological Problems in Anthropology*, Lectures and Addresses delivered before the Departments of Psychology and Pedagogy in celebration of the Twentieth Anniversary of Clark University, Worcester, 1910, pp. 125 *et seq.*

The conclusions which Dr. Goldenweiser has reached in his discussion of totemism support strongly the views towards which I incline, not only in regard to totemism, but in regard to practically all ethnological phenomena.

It may not be amiss to emphasize another point. I am inclined to lay very little stress upon the explanations of ideas and explanatory tales which we constantly obtain from primitive tribes and from others, as furnishing information of the true origin of the forms or customs in question. If an individual says that a certain design represents a bird, this does not mean that it originally meant a bird. If he says that a taboo must not be broken because it would offend the deity, this is not proof that the belief in the deity is older than the taboo. We are dealing in ethnology with re-interpretations without end, the psychological value of which is very great, but which throw no light upon the history of development. This is true also in regard to totemism; and the fact that the Australians explain their totem in one way, and the American Indians in another way, proves, I believe, very little in regard to the origin of the type of social organization in question, unless it can be proved, by considerations quite apart from the explanations given by the people themselves, that the explanations given by the people have an historical value.

I am thoroughly convinced that all problems in anthropology require, first of all, a thorough analytical study of the objective appearances of phenomena on the one hand, and of their explanations on the other, and that only by the whole synthesis of results thus obtained can results of permanent value be secured.

Franz Boas.

CAPTURING THE SOUL. — The following incident, as told by Miss Belle Greene, daughter of Mrs. Mary Greene, the missionary referred to below, took place at the Indian Manual Labor School, at the Shawnee Mission near where Kansas City, Missouri, now is. Miss Greene was a teacher in the Shawnee Mission School for a number of years. One of the pupils, a little girl about ten or eleven years of age, was taken sick and attended by a physician. After a short illness it was evident that she must die, and her parents were immediately summoned; and with them came the aged grandmother, with whom the child was an especial favorite. They were with the little one for several days before her death, and manifested deep solicitude and affection for her. When it was seen that she was dying, the parents took their place beside the bed; while the grandmother, on the other side and nearer the foot, stood motionless. With intense eagerness she kept her eyes upon the face of her dying grandchild as her breath became shorter. Suddenly, with a movement as quick as it was unexpected, the old woman arose, seized a pillow, and threw it with force directly into the face of the child, and, springing forward, pressed it down, and, grasping the two ends in her hands, folded them, as it were, together, before any one could prevent. The parents silently looked on unmoved. The missionary, grieved and shocked at what seemed such cruel heartlessness, cried, "What do you mean? You must not do so!" and attempted to take the pillow. The grandmother herself gently removed it, held it an instant still folded, and, as she